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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5377
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2140
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 4051
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9582
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2822
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1409
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4490
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9025
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 8723
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 8183
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3807
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6169
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: SAMJHAUTA EXPRESS TRAIN BOMBINGS UNEXPECTEDLY
ENHANCE INDIA-PAKISTAN COOPERATION, FOR NOW

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Classified By: DCM Geoff Pyatt, Reason 1.5 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: Indian and Pakistani officials rushed to mobilize joint efforts in response to the February 18th attack on the New Delhi to Lahore Samjhauta ("friendship") Express train, which killed 67 Indian and Pakistani nationals. Indian press reports point out that this may be the first time that both Indian and Pakistani victims died together in a terrorist attack of this magnitude. The finger pointing and accusations that often follow a terrorist strike were kept to a minimum, and both sides stressed that despite the terrorists' best intentions, the blasts would not destroy the progress India and Pakistan have made in the peace process. The BJP opposition took the opportunity to accuse the Congress-led government of being soft on terrorism, while railway officials admitted to us that there were serious lapses in security surrounding the train and the GOI may have had some advance warning that the railways were a target for attacks. End Summary.

Anguish on Both Sides of the Border

12. (C) Headlines across India expressed shock and sadness at the loss of 67 Indian and Pakistani nationals as explosions destroyed two train cars of the Samjhauta Express train between New Delhi and Lahore on February 18th. News reports say there were only 15 initial survivors of the fires that engulfed the two cars, as the train continued moving for

nearly 5 minutes and 10 kilometers before finally halting. Senior officials in the Indian Railways Protection Force say the explosions were caused by crude improvised explosive devices (IEDs) connected to multiple containers of kerosene. Instead of ripping the compartments apart, as did the explosions in the July 2006 Mumbai attacks, the IEDs were designed to cause smaller blasts igniting the kerosene and the entire coach, and ultimately left few survivors. Indian press reports have highlighted the anguish of a Pakistani mother who lost five of her six children in the fire. Police sources say after the explosions, passengers in car No. 5 found several unattended bags and pushed them off the car, including one that contained an IED connected to a container of kerosene. Press reports say the explosions were in a third-class chair car, so most of the victims were poor or lower-middle class passengers. Our RSO has confirmed that there were no American citizens killed or injured in the explosions.

Talks Still On

13. (C) Following senior-level Congress party meetings, Indian officials resolved to condemn the blasts and to send a strong signal that the attacks would not endanger the peace talks between India and Pakistan. Prime Minister Singh promised that the perpetrators will be brought to justice. Home Minister Shivraj Patel said whoever was behind the incident is against peace and wants to spoil our growing relationship with other countries. Press reports indicate that Indian and Pakistani officials worked closely with one another to respond to the attacks and focus on initial relief efforts -- in an unusual flurry of joint activity that recalled cooperation after the Kashmir earthquake. Indian officials granted a delegation from the Pakistani High Commission access to the blast site and opened a special visa camp in

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Lahore to facilitate travel by the victim's families to come to India. India is also working with Pakistani officials to bring a Pakistani C-130 to India to bring Pakistani victims of the tragedy home for treatment. Indian and Pakistani officials also kept the February 20th visit by Pakistani Foreign Minister Kasuri on track for discussions on the counter-terrorism joint mechanism.

Lapse in Security

14. (C) Recently retired Indian railways security chief A.K. Suri told Senior Pol FSN that the attack on the Samjhauta Express shows that there was inadequate security surrounding the train. Although he said the Indian government had reason to believe that the Samjhauta Express could be targeted, the train still left from Old Delhi's bustling railway station and there was no meaningful system in place to screen baggage before it entered the train. Railway officials told reporters on February 19th that new security procedures would be put in place following the bombings to move the point of departure away from New Delhi station and put passengers through security procedures similar to those of airlines.

15. (C) Opposition BJP leaders took the opportunity to lob political accusations at the UPA government, saying the tragedy demonstrated that the government was soft on terrorism and needed to strengthen India's counter-terrorism laws. L.K. Advani said the blasts demonstrate the lack of concerted approach in the Centre's policy to deal with the menace of terrorism. Party President Rajnath Singh told the press that the series of terrorist attacks, from Mumbai to Malegaon and Ayodhya, have taken place ever since the UPA came to power in the Centre, and it is because of their softness toward terrorism.

But Still Wary of Pakistan

¶6. (C) During a February 19th meeting with Staffdel Fite, Additional Secretary (International Organizations) KC Singh provided his views on the Samjhauta Express blasts and how that would affect Indo-Pakistani cooperation. (full report septel) Singh cited the upcoming talks with Pakistan on March 6th and 7th, the first meetings of the cooperation mechanism set up in Cuba at the end of 2006. Singh said that this mechanism was designed to shield the dialogue process from the types of events in Haryana, but also noted that the timing of the train attack was likely no coincidence. Although the Congress government, in contrast to the BJP, wishes to pursue engagement despite terrorist events, Singh cautioned that the GOI had to gauge the public threshold for terrorist attacks and subsequent engagement. He said the Mumbai train bombings last summer clearly exceeded that threshold and forced a pause in the composite dialogue. Singh also expressed concern that the mechanism advantaged the Pakistani Government because it creates a platform to legitimize Pakistani allegations of Indian involvement with terrorism in Pakistan, where there previously was none. Finally, he questioned how a Pakistani establishment that continues to abet terrorism against India could be trusted to collaborate on investigations on incidents like the train attacks.

¶7. (C) KC Singh also previewed for the delegation some of the

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issues that are likely to be raised in India and Pakistan talks over the counter-terrorism joint mechanism. KC Singh said that after the 2002 attacks on India's Parliament Building, police officials pulled cell phone records including from a SIMcard procured in the Gulf. One of the last calls (minutes before the attack) was to a Pakistan number, which KC Singh thought was a handler.

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